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THE KINGDOM OF NEPAL



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It is written in the Reg Veda, "from joy sprang forth all creation, by joy is it sustained, and unto joy it returns." Time is without beginning or end. When Siva, as Nataraj, Lord of dance, is filled with joy, and in ecstasy dances, all creation is thrown forth into the universe and a Kalpa of 4,320 million years begins. A thousand cycles of the four yugas unfold, only to be reabsorbed in the dance of Siva. Likewise, Vishnu, as Narayana, resting upon Shesha Nag on the universal ocean, is filled with desire and from his navel a lotus rises, from the opening flower the baby Brahma is born and creates the world of manifold existence. Each Mahayuga begins with a golden age of truth and justice, then moves to a yuga of duty but discontent, to a yuga of discontent, to Kaliyuga, the age in which we now live, in which "the majority of man are Sudras or slaves. They are wicked, quarrelsome and beggar-like and they are unlucky because they deserve no luck. They value what is degraded, eat voraciously and indiscriminately, and live in cities filled with thieves. They are dominated by their womenfolk, and are shallow, garrulous and lascivious, bearing too many children. They are oppressed by their kings and by the ravages of nature, famines and wars. Their miseries can only end with the coming of Kalki, the destroyer."

In Satya yuga, the age of truth, the Kathmandu Valley was a lake ruled over by Karkotak Nag, protector of the wealth of the Bhodisattvas and bringer of rain. North of the lake, on Ganesh Himal, Ganesh, the elephant-headed son of Siva and Parvati, assured the prosperity of the land. Farther to the north and west, Siva and Parvati dwelt on Mt. Kailasa. Trapped in Siva's hair, the goddess Ganga wept and from her tears flowed the waters of the sacred river Ganga or Ganges. Vipasya Buddha came to Nepal and planted the seed of a lotus in the lake. From the lotus in the lake their appeared the sacred flame of Swayambunath. Many other mortal Buddhas and sages came to worship the

flame and were absorbed into its light. Manjusri came from Mahachin (China) to worship Swayambunath and after deep meditation turned south and with his sword cut the Chobar Gorge on the south side of the Kathmandu Valley and drained the lake. Appointing one of his followers, Raja Dharmakar, as king, he then returned to China. As the waters of the valley receded, Karkotak Nag was given the pool at Taudah on the south side of the valley for his home and all of the other Nags sacred tanks throughout the Valley. When propitiated they bring rain and when angry they bring earthquakes. Viswabhu Buddha came to the Valley and discovered Gujeswari (Parvati) near to Pashupatinath where she is worshipped by Buddhists as Prajna or knowledge and by the Hindus as Sakti or energy. For Hindus in Nepal, Siva as Pashupatinath, the lord of the animals, is the most sacred form of Siva and the protective deity of Nepal. The prototype for Pashupatinath as an ipsophallic yogi in deep meditation, surrounded by animals, exists in the clay seals of the Indus Valley civilization prior to the arrival of the Aryans in India. Worshipped as an erect phallus throughout Nepal, Siva is not only creator and destroyer, but Lord of fertility, his most sacred temple being the Temple of Pashupatinath in the Kathmandu Valley.

During Satya Yuga, Dipankar Buddha came to Nepal and in Patan he accepted from an old lady the alms of a few grains of rice before that of the Raja, contending that the grain of the old lady had been collected with much greater effort than the gold of the Raja. The Raja worked as a blacksmith for two months to earn by his own sweat alms for the Buddha. To this day, in Patan, a great festival is held in memory of this act of generosity. Great golden images of the Dipankar Buddha are taken on procession through the city and alms are given to the poor.

The last of the seven mortal Buddhas to visit the Kathmandu Valley was Sakya Sinha Buddha of Kapilavastu. Born in Lumbini in southern Nepal, the son of Raja Suddhodana of the Sakya clan, he had at age 35, gone to Bodh Gaya and achieved enlightenment after forty days of meditation. According to the Swayambu Purana, Buddha visited the Kathmandu Valley during the reign of the Kirati Raja Jitedasti, to pay his respects to the Adi-buddha, Swayambu. Visiting the chaitya of Namobuddha near to Dhulakhel, he opened the chaitya to reveal the pair of earrings that he had worn in a previous life, when as Namo Buddha, he had given his flesh to feed a starving tiger and her cubs. He then went to the city of Kusi near Gorakhpur and there he died and achieved Nirvana.

During the reign of the great Indian Emperor Ashoka Buddhism became the official religion of his empire. On a visit to Lumbini, he inscribed a stone column with the date of his visit. The column was rediscovered by a German archaeologist working for the British and the inscription has been translated

to 272 B.C. According to Nepali tradition, Charumati, the daughter of the Emperor Ashoka, married a Nepali prince, established a Buddhist monastery at Deo Patan and built the stupas that exist to the present day on the four cardinal points of the city of Patan and the stupa at Dev Patan in Chabil.

From the 4th century onwards, throughout Nepal are found stone inscriptions on steles and at the base of sculptures which tell of the kings who dedicated great works of art to temples and monasteries. In the national archives and in the homes of many Hindu and Buddhist priests are found palm leaf manuscripts dating from as early as the 11th century which are among the world's oldest books. Here are recorded the legends of the Kathmandu Valley, the stories of the gods, the chronologies of kings, the doctrines of the great spiritual teachers, and the holy books of the different religious sects of Nepal. Though this treasury of information is vast, it constitutes only a fraction of the history of Nepal. Reading and writing was historically the prerogative of priests, rulers, and the mercantile class. What they presented in writing is their perspective and their personal interests. The greater history of Nepal, indeed most of Nepal's cultural tradition, is an oral tradition. That which one man can learn in a lifetime and transmit to another, is the way that Nepal's traditions have been preserved up to the present day. In each area of the country, within each caste, tribal, and ethnic group, will be preserved the history and traditions of that area of Nepal. A grandmother seated by the fire in the kitchen may over many evenings tell the history of the village and the gods and goddesses that have come to protect the village. Seated in a courtyard and playing a drum, a man may take a week or more of evenings to tell the story of a famous local king and his exploits in defense of the land against invaders. Traveling troupes of dancers and musicians may come to a village and present the story of Ram and Sita, Krishna, or Hari Chand, with hundreds of villagers coming each evening to be entertained and at the same time learn both of their past and how to model their everyday lives through emulating the responses of the heroes and heroines of the stories to adversities common to all people in every age. When perplexed with a problem people will often refer to the Ramayana or the life of one of the other gods for an example of how to deal with the situation. They will know the story not by having read it but by having been told the story or having seen it performed. Knowing the local versions of history and mythology will guide you in coming to understand not only the beliefs and values, but the examples by which people mold their lives and which guide them in future action.

Perhaps the most ancient history retold in Nepal is that of the Kirati of the eastern hills who comprise the Rai and

Limbu tribes. The Kirati claim to have come from the mountainous kingdom of Elam in western Iran. Having defeated the Babylonians, they were later defeated by the Assyrians and driven into Afghanistan. Migrating to India they fought in the great war of the Mahabharata, in which it is recorded that Arjuna, hero of the story, went on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas and there fought with and was defeated by Shiva disguised as a Kirati. In a later story, Kirata Raja Humati's son Jitedasti went to Kurukshetra to fight on the side of the Pandavas against the Kauravas. Another Kirati king is said to have gone to Janakpur to compete for Sita's hand in marriage but broke the code of conduct of the kingdom of Mithila. He was killed and Raja Janak sent one of his own family to rule over Nepal. It was during the reign of a Kirati king that Gautama Buddha was born at Lumbini and according to the Swayambu Purana visited the Kathmandu Valley. According to the same source, Ashoka on his visit to Lumbini also visited the Kathmandu Valley and gave his daughter, Charumatti, to a Chhetri named Devapala. According to tradition, the Kiratis ruled the Kathmandu Valley from the 6th century B.C. till they were replaced as rulers by the Lichhavi Dynasty around the first century A.D.

The earliest of the great Hindu epics, the Ramayana, tells the story of the life of Ram and Sita. In the story, Janak, the king of Mithila, with his capital at Janakpur, is renowned as a great philosopher king in whose court gathered the greatest teachers and sages of Hinduism. (The Maithili literary tradition remains one of the richest in Nepal and on the great festivals of Ram Nom and Bibah Panchmi hundreds of sadhus still come to Janakpur to worship and debate.) Ram of Ayodhya went to Janakpur and by breaking the bow that no other man could pull, claimed Sita for his bride. Later Sita is kidnapped by Ravana the demon king of Lanka and Ram with the aid of Hanuman, the monkey god, rescues Sita and they return to Ayodhya to live the lives of the model husband and wife.

Beneath the complexities of deep religious and philosophic embellishments of centuries of retelling, there is an element of simplicity, a very human story of real people which contains and retains a historic reality which is firmly believed by many Hindus. It is the belief in the authenticity of the story which makes the events so real for people living in the Terai that they are retold as though they had happened only yesterday.

The earliest inscription in the Kathmandu Valley is the inscription of Jaya Deva at Changu Narayan of 464 A.D. Contemporaries of the Guptas of India, the Lichhavis ruled the Kathmandu Valley from the 1st century A.D. till the middle of the 8th century. D. R. Regmi, in Ancient Nepal, quotes the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Wang Hsien T'se's comments on the Nepal of this period as follows:

All their utensils are made of copper. The merchants there, moving and stationary are numerous; cultivators rare since they do not know how to plow the earth with the bulls. . . . They bathe themselves several times a day. Their houses are constructed of wood. The walls of these are sculptured and painted. They are very fond of scenic plays, they take part in blowing trumpets and playing drums. They understand fairly well calculation of destiny and researches in physical philosophy. They are equally clever in the art of calendar making. They adore five celestial spirits and sculpture their images in stone.

This, the earliest historic account of Nepal by an outside observer, speaks clearly of a highly advanced civilization. The Chinese are not known for their appreciation of other cultures and another Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, wrote: "The climate is cold, the people are rude and deceitful and naturally unsociable. They do not know the value of time and justice, and have no learning, but they are much skilled in arts. . . ." The frankness of the criticism makes the praise of Nepal's cultural accomplishments all the more creditable.

Nepal's contact with Tibet and China was not confined to the visits of Buddhist pilgrims. In the 7th century, Srong-tsan Gompo united Tibet and threatened both Nepal and China with invasion. In response the Chinese Emperor sent his daughter in marriage to the Tibetan king. Likewise, Amsuvarma, the prime minister of King Narendradeva, secured an arrangement of peace by arranging for the marriage of Bhrikuti the daughter of the king, to Srong-tsan Gompo. She is said to have taken with her an image of the Buddha and to have converted her husband to Buddhism. He subsequently ended his policy of military expansion and became the greatest of the patrons of Mahayana Buddhism. Bhrikuti subsequently was identified with the Green Tara, a goddess of mercy, who is an important deity for both Tibetan and Nepali Buddhists.

Around 600 A.D., Amsuvarma usurped the throne from Sivadeva I, and established the Thakuri dynasty. The Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, was in Nepal during this time period and wrote that Amsuvarma was "distinguished by the soundness of his knowledge and sagacity of his spirit . . . esteemed knowledge and respected virtue. . . ."

In 889 A.D. Nanya Deva from the Karnatak region of south India conquered the Kathmandu Valley. A controversy centers around whether there is a direct relationship between the Nayars of South India and the Newars of Nepal and whether or not many Newari customs including attitudes towards women which are much

more liberal than that of most Nepalis, and Newari language have been influenced by a migration of Nayars into the Kathmandu Valley.

When hard pressed by the Muslim invasions of the 14th century, Harishinha Deva of the kingdom of Simraungarh in what is now Nepal's Bara district retreated into the Kathmandu Valley and brought with him the image of the Goddess Taleju, who is believed to have been the household deity of Rama of the Ramayana. He became the ruler of Baktipur and installed the image in the palace complex that now stands on the main square of the town and which is regarded as one of the most powerful Tantric deities in Nepal.

In the beginning of the 12th century, Abhaya Malla defeated the last Thakuri king and established the Malla Dynasty. Though Buddhism continued to flourish and receive royal patronage, the Mallas were orthodox Hindus. Early in the 15th century Jayasthiti Malla established the caste system in the Kathmandu Valley giving the Buddhists as well as Hindus caste ranking with all of the privileges and obligations between members of each caste and between castes that characterized the system in India. The system, however, never developed the rigidity of the caste system in India. In 1472 Yaksha Malla was unable to decide to which of three sons to leave the kingdom and subsequently divided the valley into three kingdoms, one for each son with capitals at Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktipur. Though the rivalry between the three kingdoms sometimes broke out into open warfare, it was generally a battle between kings to try to outbuild each other through a 300 year long proliferation of temples, palaces, and monasteries. This was a golden age of the arts in Nepal, producing many of Nepal's greatest works of art.

In the 13th century Jayabhimadeva Malla sent the young Newari artist, Aniko, to the court of Kublai Khan along with 80 Newari artists. The White pagoda, which remains one of the treasures of Peking to the present day, was designed and built by Aniko. He became head of the Imperial studios for casting bronzes and Nepali influence is clearly present in many Chinese images from this period.

Perhaps the greatest of the patrons of the arts was the Pratao Malla of Kathmandu who patronized all of the arts, built many of the great temples of Kathmandu, and was in his own right a learned scholar and poet. The thunderbolt at the top of the stairs leading to Swayambunath was his gift to Swayambu.

The last and most colorful of the Malla kings was Jayaprakash Malla of Kathmandu. During his reign the present Kumari festival and comic dances of Gai Jatra were initiated. Constantly at war with Patan and Bhaktapur and in conflict with the

nobles of his own court, he led the fight against Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of the valley and died in the final battle in the palace at Bhaktapur, having lost Kathmandu and Patan.

Born in 1738 of the House of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah married the daughter of the King of Makwanpur in 1738 and subsequently visited the Kathmandu Valley and stayed as a guest with Ranjit Malla, the king of Bhaktipur. In 1742 he became king of Gorkha and immediately set out to conquer the Kathmandu Valley. He was a man of great foresight. The British East India Company was swiftly expanding from Calcutta towards Nepal. One by one the small states of India were being incorporated into the British empire. During this time there were three kings in the Kathmandu Valley, 24 Chaubisi Rajas in the central hills, and 20 Naisi Rajas in the far west. To the east the Rais and Limbus were separate tribal states with only minimal ties to the Kings of the Kathmandu Valley, and the Terai a vast area of undemarcated forest and farm land. Prithvi Narayan Shah knew that unless the hills were united they could not maintain their independence from the British. It took until 1769 for the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley and the western hills to be completed. Nepal was not totally united until the conquest of the Rais and Limbus in the eastern hills just before the end of the 18th century.

In Father Ludwig Stiller's book, Prithwinarayan Shah in the Light of Dibya Upadesh, he quotes the king's final injunction to his descendants. Some of the remarks that show great foresight include: "Let the king see that great justice is done. Justice is crippled when bribes are given and when bribes are accepted. In each court put a man skilled in the law. Conduct the courts according to the law. Money collected in the courts must never be used for the palace. . . ."

During a period of two minor kings in the early 19th century, the prime minister, Bhimsen Thapa, was able to rule the country with an iron hand from 1811 to 1839. In 1812 and 1814 he fought two wars with the British which resulted in the loss of much of the Terai, Sikkim and Darjeeling, and the hill states to the west of the present border of Nepal. He was, however, able to maintain the sovereignty of present day Nepal and secure a treaty with the British which minimized British interference in Nepal's internal affairs. While prime minister, he filled the most important posts in the government with members of his own family including Amarsingh Thapa, one of Nepal's most famous generals in the struggle against the British.

In the early 1840s, King Rajendra Bikram Shah appointed his junior queen Rajya Laxmi Devi regent, preferring the pursuit of poetry and Sanskrit literature to royal power. The queen was ambitious and wanted to have her own son become king. Jung

Bahadur Kunwar was an aide to the king, who became a favorite of the Queen and through whose influence was appointed a general in the army. Four months later Gagan Singh, another favorite of the Queen, was murdered and the Queen accused Kishore Pandey of the murder and ordered that he be executed, but the King ordered the execution stopped until he could consult with the prime minister. When the king left, Jung Bahadur, who had brought his troops with him and stationed them in readiness, ordered them to attack the unarmed courtiers who had been summoned in the middle of the night to the Kot (a central courtyard near Hanuman Dhoka, the old Newar king's palace in Kathmandu). About 75 high-ranking officers and members of the court were killed and Jung Bahadur took direct control of the government. The King and Queen were sent into exile to Banares, Crown Prince Surendra Bikram Shah was made regent, and Jung Bahadur made his family hereditary prime ministers of Nepal, which they ruled with an iron hand until 1951. Jung Bahadur gave himself the title of Rana, and rewrote the law code after a visit to England and France, and made all important posts in the government the prerogative of his own family.

The Ranas were a paradox, being famous for both their vices and their orthodox religious beliefs. Every effort was made to close Nepal off to western influence. During the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion, Jung Bahadur sent Nepali troops to aide the British in the recapture of the city of Lucknow. He took the opportunity to raid the treasury of the Nabobs of Oudh, and returned to Nepal with a collection of fabulous jewels that ended up in the crowns and ceremonial regalia of the Rana court. From this time the British began recruiting Gurkhas into the British army.

One Rana prime minister whose liberal attitudes and efforts to reform the government of Nepal deserves note was Deb Shamshere. He became prime minister in 1901 and served only three and a half months before he was overthrown by Chandra Shumsher. In less than a hundred days he called an assembly of all castes and elicited their suggestions for improving the government, opened schools, started postal delivery, sent students to Japan for study, and tried to abolish slavery.

The Ranas maintained very close relations with the British in India and sent both troops and supplies to fight in both World War I and World War II. With the end of World War II and the approach of Indian independence, the Ranas lost their strongest ally. Many Nepalese had joined the Indian Freedom Fighters and shared democratic ideals with the Congress Party in India. A Nepali National Congress Party was organized in Calcutta in 1947, with the intent of overthrowing the Ranas and establishing democracy in Nepal. The new government in India was extremely antagonistic to the Ranas for their support of the British.

Mohan Shumsher became prime minister in 1948 and made a weak attempt to arrive at a compromise with the liberal forces, but the Ranas were themselves divided into liberal and reactionary camps. King Tribhuvan shared the views of the liberals and on November 6, 1950, fled the palace and took refuge in the Indian Embassy, with all of the members of his family except prince Gyanendra who was immediately taken by the Ranas and crowned king; Tribhuvan was granted permission to fly to New Delhi. London and New Delhi refused to recognize the new king. In response to the Nepali Congress party's call for revolt, a general strike closed all of the shops in the Kathmandu Valley and armed volunteers of the Nepali Congress crossed the border from India and took Birgunj and raided other police checkposts along the border. The former commander-in-chief Rudra Shumsher, in exile in Palpa, arrested the local governor and came to the aid of the Congress Party with three battalions of combat troops. A Rana representative was called to New Delhi and on January 8th Mohan Shumsher resigned as the last Rana prime minister to rule Nepal. On February 16, 1951, King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev flew back to Nepal and two days later annulled the powers of the Rana prime ministership and formed a Rana-Congress party coalition ministry until elections could be held, a parliament assembled, and a new constitution written.

In 1951 sovereignty was restored to the Shah monarchy. In an effort to establish a new political order, King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev created a coalition government of Ranas and members of the Congress party under the prime ministership of Mohan Shumsher which, due to major political conflicts within the cabinet of ministers, did not last out the year. A second government was formed from the Nepali Congress, but when the King chose M. P. Koirala over the president of the Nepali Congress, B. P. Koirala, the party was split and the government fell. In 1952, Tribhuvan ruled through a Royal Council and in 1953 M. P. Koirala again became prime minister as head of the newly created National Democratic Party. In 1954 a National Coalition Cabinet was created and an Interim Constitution proclaimed by the King which created a separation of the executive and the judiciary, a Public Service Commission, and an Auditor General.

During this period of experimentation efforts were made at administrative reorganization, the first government budget was published, untouchables were admitted into the public schools, the British were allowed to recruit Gurkhas within Nepal, and construction began on the Tribhuvan Rajpath giving Nepal its first link by road to the outside world.

In 1955 King Tribhuvan died and Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev became king. Being impatient with the democratic process, king Mahendra created a council of Royal Advisors and directly

supervised the functioning of government. In 1956 the king called for the formation of a government by the Praja Parishad party with Tanka Prasad Acharya as prime minister. This government was replaced in 1957 by a government formed from the United Democratic Party with K. I. Singh as prime minister. The Gandak Project to share the waters of the Gandak river with India was initiated. There was a major controversy over the use of local languages in the schools. A clash of wills between the king and the prime minister resulted in the dismissal of the government and the king again took direct responsibility for running the government and preparing for national elections. In 1958 King Mahendra created a council of ministers under the chairmanship of Subarna Shumsher. Seven Ranas and four Shahs were appointed to be the new district magistrates, a statement of policy on land reform was presented, Royal Nepal airlines was chartered, and preparations made for general elections to a National parliament.

Prior to the elections of 1959, King Mahendra promulgated a new constitution which established the Crown as the supreme authority. The guarantees of fundamental rights in the constitution were limited by a preventive detention clause whereby any individual could be detained for up to three months without the government having to present cause for detention.

On February 18, 1959, elections were held for representatives to the Parliament. Forty-two percent of the people voted and out of 109 seats the Nepali Congress Party won 74 seats, the Gorkha Parishad won 19 seats and the other parties the remainder. B. P. Koirala became prime minister. The first five year plan for development was prepared, income and property taxes were enacted, Birta (tax free) land tenure was abolished, a new trade and transit treaty was negotiated with India, and district development offices were created to implement development programs. Efforts at land reform and the interception of peasant debts to landlords ran into stiff opposition especially from landlords in the hills west of the Kathmandu Valley. In the Gorkha region the economic struggle became one of armed clashes which resulted in the government having to use troops to maintain law and order.

On December 15, 1960, the King dissolved the parliament government dismissed and arrested most of the important political leaders. King Mahendra inaugurated the system of Panchayat Raj. Political parties were banned. A four tier system of panchayats was created from Gaun (village) to jilla (district) to anchal (zonal) to Rastriya (national) panchayat, with each level selecting from among their own numbers those who could represent them at the next highest level in the system. In the constitution of 1962, class organizations were created with representation at each level. The graduate constituency with 2,200 members voted as

a whole for their four representatives to the National Panchayat and on occasion the graduate constituency representatives challenged the system to the extent of being arrested under the preventive detention act. Sessions of the Rastriya Panchayat were held in-camera and actions of the royal family and decisions of the Supreme Court judges could not be discussed. Money bills or legislation pertaining to the army could not be introduced without royal permission. Bills became law only after receiving Royal assent. Ministers including the prime minister were appointed and dismissed by the king. As a result, power shifted from the Rastriya Panchayat to the Palace Secretariat.

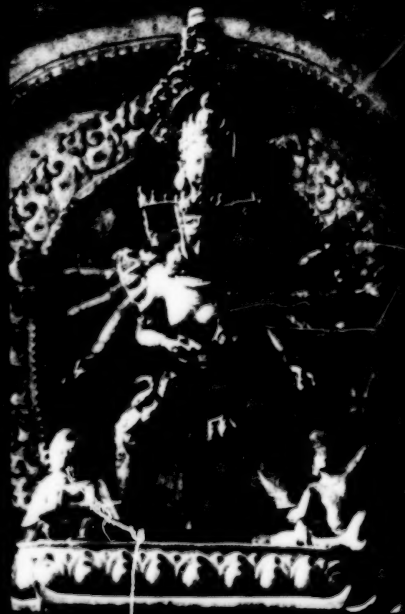
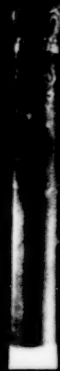
In January 1972, King Mahendra died and King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev ascended the throne. In 1973 a National Development Council was formed and the country divided into regional development centers in an effort to decentralize the development process. The "Back to the Village" national campaign which had been inaugurated by King Mahendra was revived. Committees were set up on each level in the Panchayat system to help implement development programs and serve as an unofficial party to recruit development workers. Given considerable power to determine whether an individual was qualified to stand for public office, the committees were accused of bias and were dissolved by the king in 1979. As the result of a series of strikes by students and government workers in May 1979 King Birendra announced that a referendum would be held to determine whether the people of Nepal would prefer a multi-party system or the existing panchayat system with reforms, as a government structure. After a year of political debate the referendum was held on May 2, 1980. Prior to the referendum the king announced that representatives to the new Rastriya Panchayat would be elected by universal suffrage, and that the prime minister would be responsible to the Rastriya Panchayat, and the day-to-day affairs of the government would be the responsibility of the elected representatives of the people. In the referendum the vote was counted in favor of retaining the panchayat system with reforms by 54.7 to 45.3 of the votes cast. On December 15, 1980, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev promulgated the third amendment to the constitution. The King remains the source of all authority with the right to dismiss any public official including an elected prime minister. The new legislature will have 140 members, 28 appointed by the King and 112 to be elected by universal adult franchise. Candidates for the Rastriya Panchayat must be members of one of the six class organizations: women's, peasant's, youth, labor, ex-service-men, or adult (praudha) organization. A candidate, to be Prime Minister, must receive 60% of the votes cast by members of the legislature. If no one receives 60% of the votes any three names from among members of the legislature will be submitted to the King, who will then appoint the Prime Minister. The cabinet will be responsible to the legislature and the day-to-day administration of the government will be conducted by elected officials. The initiative and power of amending the Constitution is vested solely in the monarch.

On March 23, 1981 the Nepal Election Commission announced elections for representatives to the new legislature for May 9, 1981. Though the major political parties boycotted the elections, 1,096 candidates qualified to run for 112 seats. During the week of May 9, 1981, elections to the new legislature were conducted without any major incidents and the Rastriya Panchayat scheduled to meet on June 11, 1981. The success of the new government will depend in large measure on how effectively it can accelerate the pace of development.

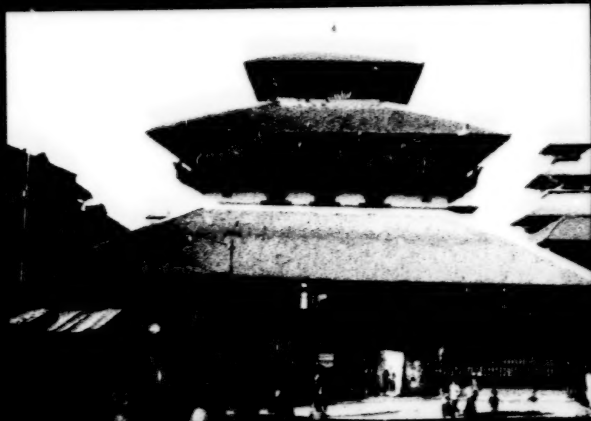
The government faces formidable problems as it strives to provide for the basic needs of the people of Nepal. Deforestation, erosion, and the pressures of an increasing population are resulting in a rapid deterioration of the environment in Nepal. Of the Second Plan (1961-1965) for the development of Nepal, one Nepali economist has been quoted in Nepal in Crisis (p. 58): "The implementation of the Plan did not produce any marked impact on the condition of the common people largely because during the plan period the national income was estimated to have risen by 7%, while at the same time population increased by 6 percent." Concerning the Fourth Five Year Plan, the National Planning Commission has written that "although a number of developmental works have been undertaken in different sectors of the economy, there has not been virtually any noteworthy change in the basic condition of agriculture." For a nation in which over 93% of the population is dependent upon agriculture for their subsistence this is a very serious matter. While the population is increasing at the rate of 2.4 percent per year, there has been an overall decline in per capita production. A massive increase in the number of individuals employed directly by the state has failed to stimulate significant growth due in part to a lack of trained individuals, work incentives, and the necessary back-up of technical advice and material assistance.

Given government priorities, progress has been made in many areas. Roads now link Kathmandu with Tibet in the north and India to the south. The road from Kathmandu to Pokhara links up with the road from Pokhara to Bhairawa. An east-west highway which now links most of the Terai from east to west will soon be completed. Airports and airstrips have given access to remote areas in the hills and the Terai. Newspapers, wireless, a postal system, and Radio Nepal provide communication to an ever increasing segment of the population. Primary schools have been built which provide a basic education for most of the school age population. Agricultural production has seen the introduction of new seeds, fertilizer, insecticides, and new methods of cultivation, which have greatly increased agricultural production in the Kathmandu Valley and the Terai. Three major new irrigation systems are under construction in the central Terai. The Kosi and Gandaki hydroelectric projects as well as smaller ones at Trisuli

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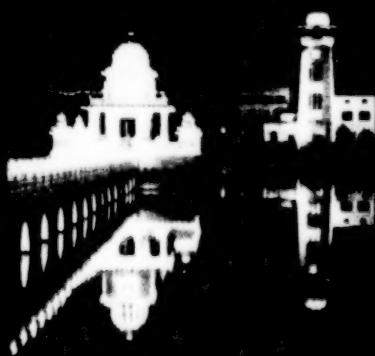
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and steam powered electricity plants in some district centers provide electricity for the major towns in the Terai and in the Kathmandu Valley. Hospitals, clinics, and a family planning program, while limited in facilities, will ultimately have an impact on reducing Nepal's rate of population growth. At present, development programs lack the necessary administrative structure and trained personnel to fully utilize the foreign aid which finances up to 70% of the development programs. What is certain is that there exists both within and outside of the government a new generation of dedicated individuals deeply concerned with the problems of development. Many have received educations both at home and abroad which give them the necessary skills to contribute to Nepal's development. As the Nepali political system continues to evolve in response to the needs of the people, more opportunities will become available for public service. King Birendra has made major changes in the structure of the Panchayat system and as the new structures are tested by the needs of development further changes can be expected. To the extent that both the elected and appointed representatives to the Rastriya Panchayat can articulate the needs of the people and provide the structures and expertise for development programs to meet those needs, Nepal will be able to strive towards assuring social justice and an improved standard of living for the people of Nepal, maintain friendly and cooperative relationships with her neighbors, and set an example for all other developing countries.

S.T.E.

Glossary

Bhodisattva--one who has attained enlightenment but who renounces Nirvana to remain among mankind to guide others along the path to enlightenment.

Brahma--first cause, creator of the universe. In Puranic myth, one of the three gods sharing responsibility for the creation of the universe, Vishnu being the preserver and Siva being the destroyer.

Chaitya--also called a stupa--is a religious shrine which serves as a symbol of the universe and is an object of veneration --originally a burial mound--may contain sacred relics.

Kalki--the 10th avatar or incarnation of Lord Vishnu who will come on a white horse and holding a flaming sword--will destroy the world at the end of Kaliyuga.

Kalpa--one day in the life of Brahma the Creator, 4,320 million years on earth.

Karkotak Nag--King of the serpents who helped to bring Machin-dranath to the Kathmandu Valley.

Mahayuga--a Kalpa is divided into one thousand great ages (Mahayugas) and each of these is divided into four ages or yugas--we now live in Kaliyuga--the black age.

Manjusri--the "Glorious Gentle One"--a Bodhisattva who epitomizes wisdom and learning--generally depicted seated with a sword of knowledge raised in his right hand and a book of knowledge. He is believed by Newars to have come from China and to have drained the lake that was the Kathmandu Valley and to have established the first settlement in the Valley.

Narayana--Vishnu when depicted reclining on the coils of the serpent Shesha Naga on the eternal seas when he created the universe.

Parvati--Goddess of the Mountains--wife of Shiva--generally depicted seated on Shiva's left on Mt. Kailasa listening to him teach the tantras.

Pashupatinath--Shiva as Lord of the Animals--the most important temple to Shiva located on the Bagmati River in the Kathmandu Valley.

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Rig Veda--oldest and most sacred of the Hindu holy books--believed to have been brought to India as an oral tradition by the Aryans and codified in its present form during the 5th to 9th centuries A.D.

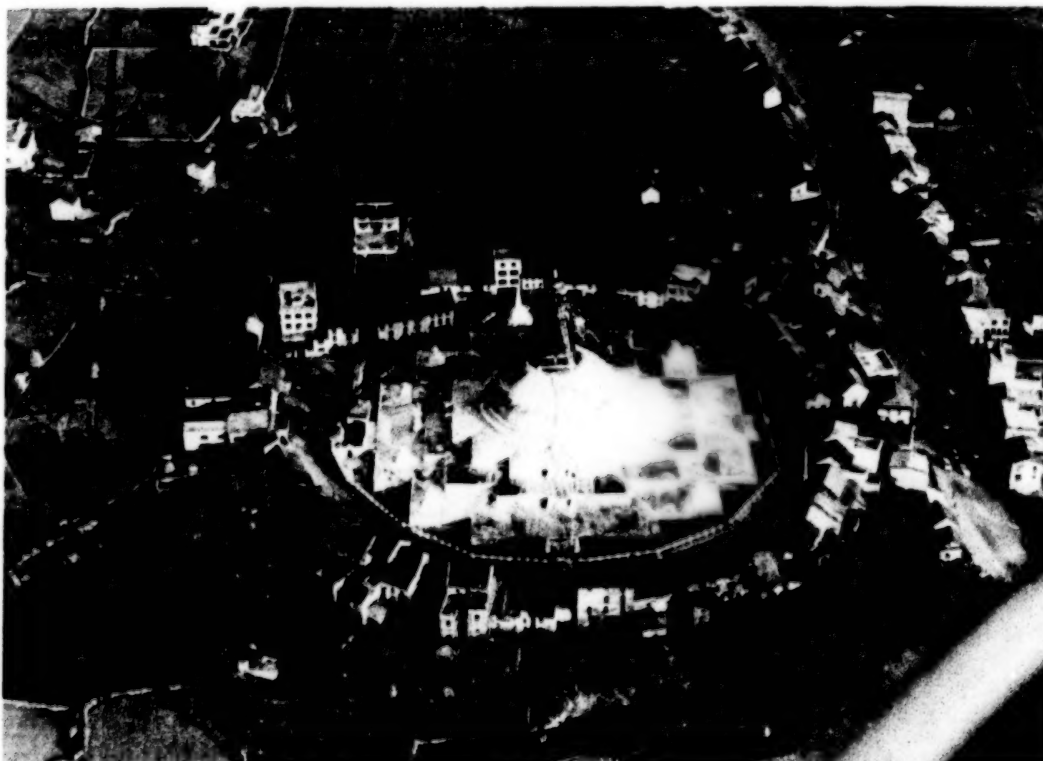
Shesha Nag--the Naga on which Vishnu as Narayana sleeps.

Shiva--the god of Hinduism who is the destroyer and regenerator. God of ascetics, often represented as a lingam--dwells on Mt. Kailesa.

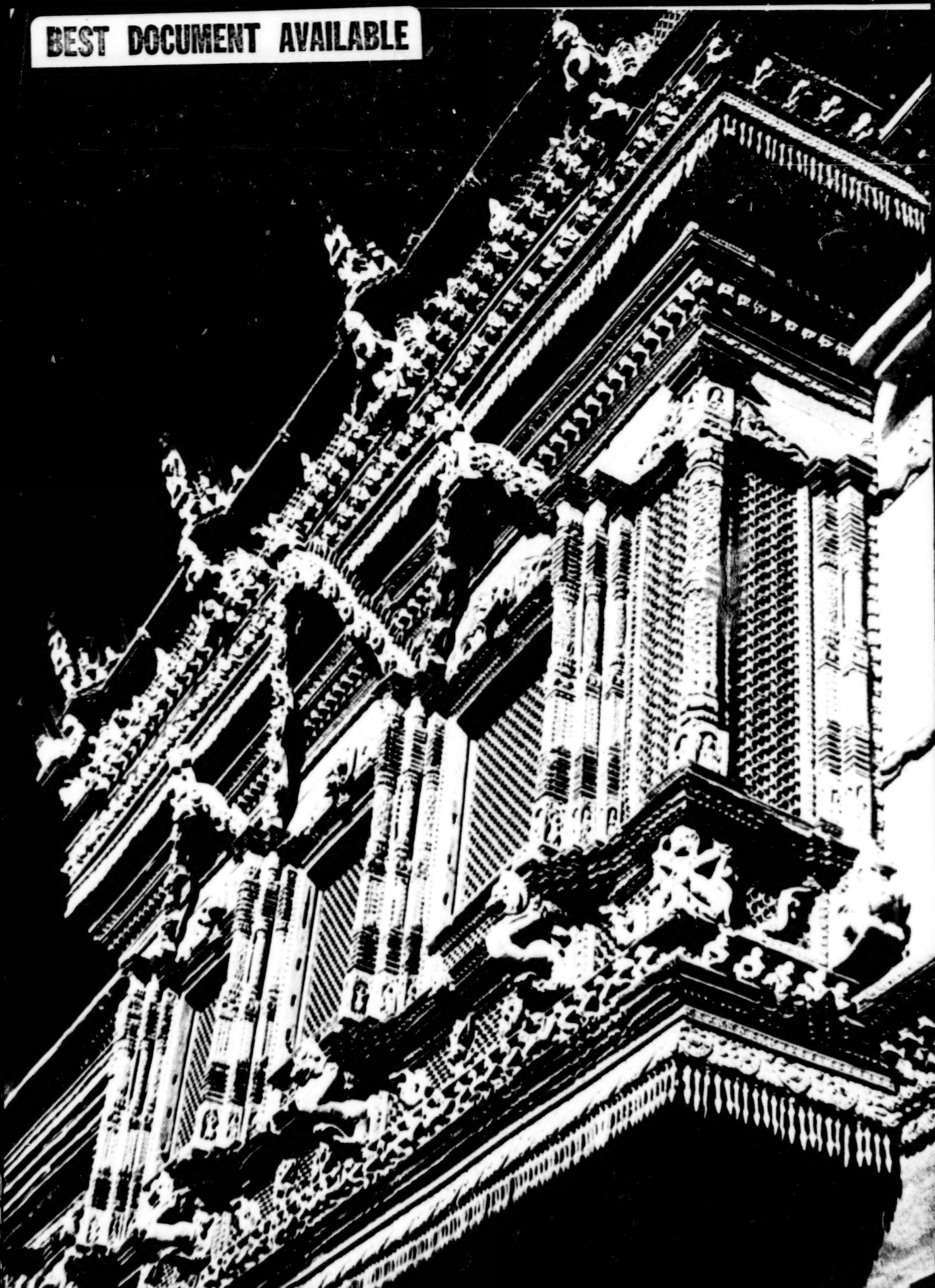
Swayambunath--one of the oldest and most highly venerated stupas in the Kathmandu Valley--2 miles west of Kathmandu.

Swayambu Purana--the book of Buddhist history containing the legends of the settling of the Kathmandu Valley, visits of Buddhas, and events that have taken place in the Kathmandu Valley since that time.

Vishnu--the Preserver in Hinduism. He intervenes to save the world from destruction. His wife Lakshmi is the goddess of prosperity. He has had nine incarnations, the most famous being Rama, Krishna, and Buddha.



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A WINDOW ON
NEPALESE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

by Dr. P. R. Sharma

Though Kathmandu is a conglomeration of modernism and antiquities as it is, it still is a living museum of the ancient civilization, art and culture of the country.

Only the art and architecture of Kathmandu valley are covered by the ambit of this article. It is a millenium and a half old, is religious in character and symbolic in meaning, finding expression through the rendering of figures, mainly deities, in wood, stone and color, and wherever found relevant, introducing those of men, animals and plants as well. While the stress is on meaning, aesthetic values are not neglected.

The Historical Backdrop

The mid-6th century saw the Lichhavi dynasty in power and ties with China and Tibet growing. Thakuris reigned from the 8th century, till the Malla kings came on the scene five centuries later, in their turn, to be ousted by the founder of the present ruling Shah dynasty, in 1768 A.D.

The Golden Age of Nepalese art dawned and later flourished under the Mallas, whose splendorous relics exist even today. Ties with Tibet grew firmer and the reputation of the Nepalese artist, A-ni-ko prompted the emperor of China, Qublai Khan, to invite him to Peking and make him profess and propagate his art there for the remainder of his life. Earlier, at the emperor's insistence, the abbot of Sa-skya, the oldest monastery of Tibet, had been instrumental in getting a golden stupa erected by A-ni-ko in Tibet, with the assistance of 80 other Nepali artists. A-ni-ko was survived in China for several years by a school of bronze casting which was the product of his genius.

Stone Art

The Mathura school of stone sculpture mothered the origin in Nepal around the 4th century of a few stray instances of stone carving, as represented by the three dimensional image of Shiva at Pashupati Aryaghat and the nativity scene of Maya Devi in Deopatan. These are bold, heavy and robust in concept. All the carvings of the Mathura school found in Nepal differ in the general

spirit and imagery from later works. The absence of folk elements, the prim and pruned state of these classical Hindu or Buddhist oriented sculptures of this early isolated phase, point towards its Indian origin and inspiration. This heralded the founding of a regular, local school in the mid-5th century, which extended into the 9th century and may be termed the Lichhavi or classical stone art of Nepal. The skills and ideas came from the Ikshvaku, Gupta, later Gupta, Deccan and Pala schools of India, at various periods, all of which instead of creating confusion, led to the formation of a new scheme with originality as its forte, which was to become a characteristic of Nepali images. The main manifestations of this school may be found in the stone icons of Vishnu, the Umamaheswari panels and the images of Buddha Avalokiteswarus, Padmapani and Vajrapani.

Nevertheless, it is the Gupta school's inspiration that holds supreme sway in this period, as evidenced by its subtlety, ingenuity and refinement, as also in the contours of figures and their expressive faces. The low relief carvings add a dimensional effect and impart feelings to onlookers, most noticeable in the technique of drilling holes in certain images. The images of Padmapani, Garuda and Lakshmi are typical instances that show up the plasticity, polish and lustre of naturalistic modelling with scarce ornamentation to embellish it. Female figures show delicacy and grace, supplemented by a suggestion of voluptuousness.

The Buddha and Avalokiteswara images bear close resemblance to those of the Gupta period found in Sarnath and Nalanda.

The Umamaheswara panels, depicting the Shiva couple in an informal attitude of repose on Kailasha mount, surrounded by their family are numerous in Kathmandu and are akin to those in Ellora. Ornamentation of borders with petals and flames characterize its later classical period development.

The norm and style of these Lichhavi period works, which form the basis of Nepalese art, endured in the quiet and secluded valley where traditions were jealously guarded, preserved and cherished.

Nevertheless, new styles also found acceptance from time to time; and for the purpose of dating Nepalese sculpture, the appearance on the scene of new forms should be taken as the clue, rather than the development of old ones. The artistic periods need not be linked rigidly with the change of ruling dynasties, which were mostly peaceful and hence, did not exert violent, drastic influences leading to changes in the cultural outlook of such transitional junctures of political history.

The 9th to 14th centuries form the post-classical period and it proceeded on the rigid and the regulated plastic and

ornamental conventions of the earlier era; but it showed signs of stagnation and stultification owing to a lack of new ideas and over-reliance on old lines. This was remedied to a certain extent by the Pala school of Bengal, with its influence reaching a peak in the 11th century. Its two phases show a chaste and pure style to begin with, and a localized redefined one later.

The post-classical period signaled a diversification of production in stone, metal and color, though not yet in wood; and also the enlargement of the Vajrayana pantheons.

Malla period art beginning in the 15th century, is characterized by a steady all round decline in stone sculpture, probably owing to the advent of bronze in the field. A final effort to revive stone art is discernible in the half dozen 17th century images of Bhaktapur, which wear angry, ferocious looks and a few are found in erotic embrace in contrast to the suave and placid expressions seen on the visage of earlier sculptures. This could probably be attributed to the influence of Tantrism on the religion of that period; and in spite of external form, we should not lose sight of the fact that the deities, though forbidding in aspect, stood, nonetheless, for mercy and compassion and the ennobling concepts of Vajrayana.

Bronze

Bronzes, till very recently the only widely known objects d'art of Nepal and still the one most widely circulated, traveled to all parts of the globe owing to its easy transportability derived from handy size. The Pala school of Bengal influenced it very much. Later on, this art achieved remarkable success in Tibet, propagated there by Nepalese Masters. Then came recession. The return to Nepal of its bronze workers from Tibet after a long period of absence followed in its wake, brought about the injection of the Tibetan influence into Nepalese craft. Most critics tend to date the origin of Nepalese bronzes around the 13th and 14th centuries, when the regional style is noticeable in the work. But this author dates its origin to the 11th century before the expression of such regional characteristics came to be detected. The examples of the products of that period are Khadiaravani Tara, Vajrapani, the Buddha and Padmapani Avalokiteswara. Changes in style during the following century are exemplified in Kurukulla Tara, Devi and Vasundhara. Regional characteristics make their initial appearance in the 13th century.

Contrary to general belief, there was an earlier school of Nepalese bronze sculpture as evidenced by the 'Chandeswara' of the Indian Museum, Calcutta and the one similar to it, known as the 'Nimbate figure and attendant.'

The bulk of Nepalese bronzes is Buddhist in origin, done by Buddhist artists of Patan, a predominantly Buddhist center.

Up to the 15th century, bronzes were cast solid, with careful modelling, expressive demeanors accompanied by a minimum of ornamentation as their most striking characteristics. Later, hollow casting or the 'repousse method' replaced the original technique and certain alterations in the garments and form of the images are noticeable. From the 17th century Mongolian features and heavier ornamentation in the bronzes became a distinct feature, with hollow casting and even piecemeal casting and subsequent joining of parts, becoming the fashion. In several cases, ornaments served to hide imperfect joints. The 'Vaṛayana' pantheon dates from this period.

Painting

Painting has its beginnings in the 11th century, with illustrations and illuminations on palm leaf and "patas" depicting Buddhist deities and dramatic episodes from Buddha's life forming the main themes. The influence of the Eastern Indian school, as it is found in Ajanta and Ellora is seen very clearly. Early works had an appealing softness of line, ease and grace of the figures, with only the linear strokes lacking the spontaneity of the Eastern school. The Brahmanical influence from the 12th century onwards is very similar to the Buddhist counterpart. Modelling power registers a steep decline from the 12th century onwards, except in isolated instances. While the 'tribhanga' curve of the Pala school persisted, the influence of the western school is seen in the manifestation of sharp, hectic lines. The linear principal of the Pala style, the predominant trait of all Nepali painting, survived in spite of Western, Rajput--Moghul, Tibetan and Chinese associations alongside. Figures, as illustrated by those of the deities, in 'The Indian Buddhist Iconography' by B. Bhattacharaya, were painted from the front and profiles are rare. Use of color lacked plasticity, presumably owing to the religious aspect predominating such art.

Tibetan and Chinese influence is evident in the class of painting beginning in the 15th century, known as the 'Paubha,' comprised mainly of two types, the 'pata' and the 'mandala,' similar to Tibetan 'Thankas.' Patas are simple depiction of deities and devotees, whereas the mandala is a mystic, diagrammatic conception of the cosmos and its realization through meditation. Mid-11th century Paubhas of Tun-Huang found in west China are the earliest works in the field of painting of Nepal.

The Rajput-Moghul style of scroll paintings made their entry into Nepal in the middle of the 17th century, with the episodes from the various 'avadanas' as a feature, as also the color scheme landscapes and costumes (which had been adopted by the

Malla nobility of the period) with animals and musical instruments alone retaining local characteristics.

Since the Shah dynasty did not bring a new tradition in culture the earlier trends persisted up to the 19th century, undergoing one change, viz., the Hindu form superceding earlier Buddhist ones.

The 18th century Murals of the Malla period derived from the Pala school like the Ashtamatrika panel and Pauranic episodes in Rajput style have been found in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

Woodwork

Actual evidence of this form of art exists only from the 14th century, though it is very old in Nepal, wood having been in abundant supply always, with the craftsmen delighting in working on it. We find a few independent icons with a plethora of wood carvings of a stationery nature as they form adjuncts to palaces, monasteries and struts of temples, the oldest and best example being the "Salabhanjika" figures of the Bhairava temple of Panauti and Wokubaha at Patan. Originally, these figures of male and female deities were tall and slender in form getting stunted later, yet retaining the rounded limbs of the subjects, which subsequently yielded place to inferior flat-looking products lacking in plasticity. The corner struts of temples show the leaping form of a mythical animal with wings and the body of a lion. The carvings on the lower struts are more intriguing, with the figures of lesser deities, devotees, and also folk scenes from mundane life very often in erotic postures abounding.

Architecture

Architecture of Nepal falls under three broad heads: (1) the Stupa, (2) the Vihara, and, (3) the Temples, all showing total religious orientation.

Another type has for its basis town settlements and the nature of palaces and houses of the rulers and people of medieval Nepal, as can be found in Bhaktapur, Kirtipur, Patan and some Newar townships.

The Ashokan stupas of Patan are the earliest of the stupas in this country, which are all low hemispherical mounds of earth, with a thin layer of turf growing over them, all of which are still preserved in the original form. The most celebrated of all stupas is the Swayambhu stupa, depicting Adi Buddha, with its typical Nepali finial evolved during the medieval period (10th century), consisting of a square 'harmika,' with a pair of serene eyes of Buddha's supporting a series of 13 rings and crowned by a

majestic parasol. The domical member of the Swayambhu stupa is a large hemispherical mount based on a circular plinth and truncated at the top.

All stupas of Nepal drew their inspiration from the masterpiece at Swayambhu, although in order to add majesty to the structures, they were mounted on tall pedestals as in the case of the one found at Bodhanath. Plastering and whitewashing too have been resorted to in later years in order to lend a more attractive front to the stupas.

The Buddhist 'vihara' called the 'baha' or the 'Bahi,' with their central courtyards open to the sky, surrounded by the shrine and living quarters of the Shakyas and Vajracharyas, exist in large numbers in the Kathmandu valley.

The "Nagar" or the Indo-Aryan and the "Pagoda" are the indigenous styles which represent temple architecture of Nepal. The Nagar style is of Indian origin, probably having made its advent in the 8th or 9th century A.D., but with few of the earliest structures to be found in existence today, since perishable materials like wood and bricks were employed in their construction and partly owing to natural calamities and foreign invasions, leaving only those built from the 14th or 15th centuries extant. Since stone came to be used only from the 17th century, Nepali "Nagar" styles lack the architectural pretensions or the distinctive regional traits of their Indian counterpart. These can be classified into two categories: 1) those having a shallow and perfunctory portico in front; and (2) those with a square columned corridor.

The proudest monument of the Nagar style is undeniably the Krishna temple of Patan constructed by Siddhinarsimha Malla and consecrated in 1636 A.D. The Krishna temple imparts an impression essentially of slender, balanced and well integrated construction, with local and Rajput-Moghul styles mingling admirably. The storeyed structure, resting on two-fold square pedestals, institutes columned corridors, curvilinear towers, pavilions, quadruple shrine niches and elaborate engravings. Later imitations failed to match the original in beauty.

The second group of temples, classified under the misnomer "pagoda" style, is more indigenous in form and is rooted in the country's hoary traditions. The name 'pagoda' was imposed on it by Westerners and it caught the fancy of the local people also. It is evidently an unhappy choice of a name since it covers a wide range of structures and is spread over a vast territory, many of them lying outside the scope of the particular type of temples it is meant to describe. Hence, it would be more appropriate to refer to this class of temples as storeyed temples, rather than use the ambiguous and misleading tag of "pagoda."

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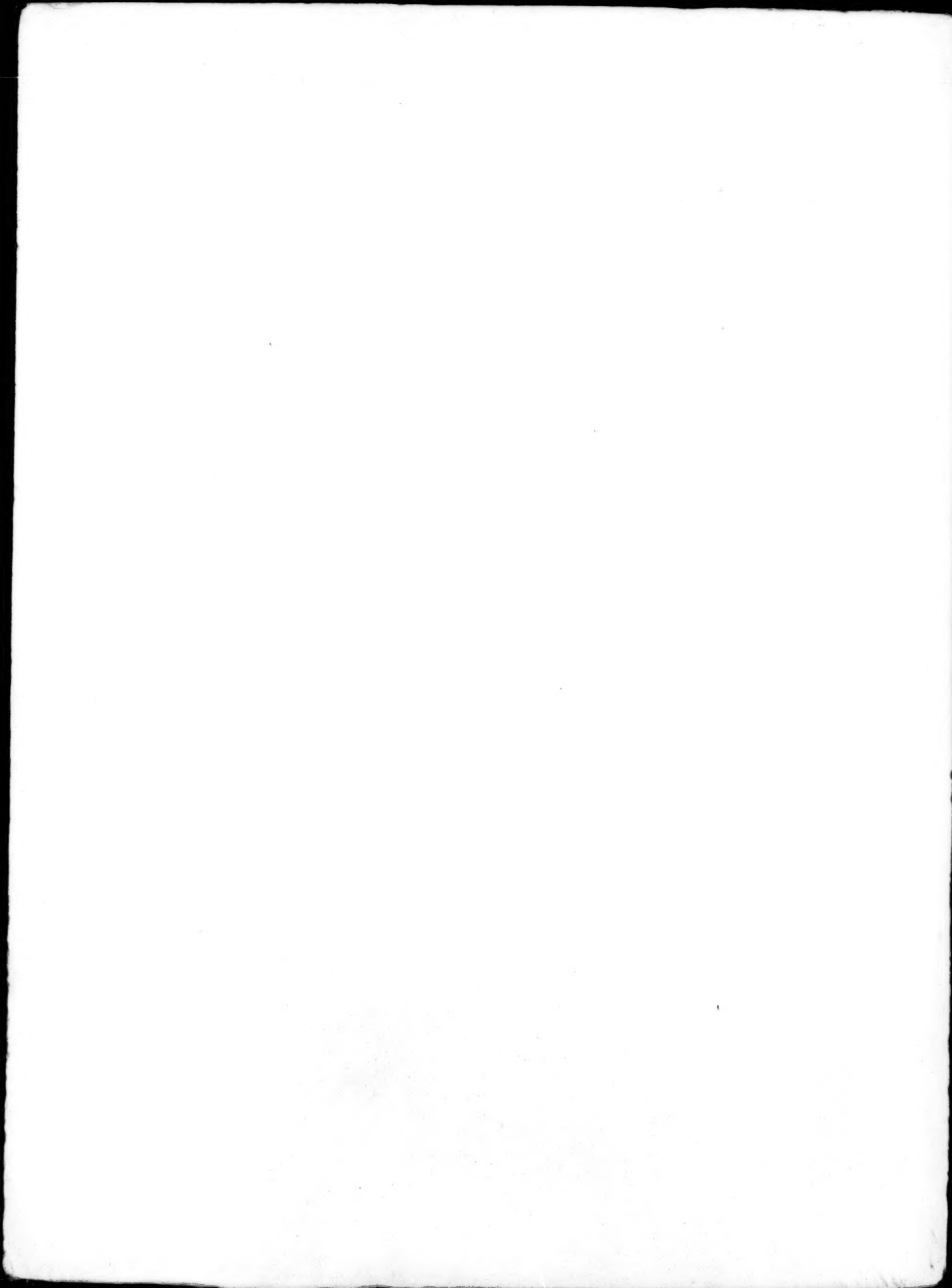
Although some hold views to the contrary, we can safely assume from available evidence that this style of storeyed structures developed independently in Nepal and China with neither having a right to claim the credit for originating the style. One may state with confidence that its origin in Nepal is during the reign of Narendradev in the 7th century A.D. Large, shining, gilded roofs, arranged in ascending tiers, richly carved pillars, struts, windows and doorways, rendered the landscape picturesque. The spread of Buddhism proliferated this form of architecture to various climes, the structures in different places undergoing changes in the process as influenced by local traditions.

These temples are mostly square in plan, with a few rectangular and octagonal ones providing interesting contrast, and are constructed on a series of pedestals which lend an air of imposing majesty and grandeur, as may be observed in the case of the Nyatapola of Bhaktapur, beside which the similarly five storeyed Kumbheswara temple of Patan without the pedestal base of the former, looks humble, by comparison. Wood and brick are mainly used with metal employed only in its finial and occasionally for roof and embossing of the facade. A colonnade goes round the sanctum and the upper part of the pillars which have square prisms at their base, are elaborately carved and bear a bracket capital and extensive beam. A flight of steps leads to the three fold temple doors on the four sides of the sanctum, with large middle doors topped with trefoiled arches. The figure of the enshrined deity appears on the "torana" suspended from the four large doors. Carved wood ornamentation is a notable feature all around and a row of animal heads extends to the struts from the broad cornices consisting of several decorative bands. This is a singular feature of Nepalese storeyed temples. The ample, tiled, sloping roof which provides excellent shelter to the whole structure is supported in this fashion. This pattern of base and superstructure, progressively reduced to $1/3$ in size and area for each successive storey above, remains identical through all the different tiers. Carved window frames, lattice screens, and the bellshaped metal finial carrying the "gajura" covered with a "chhatra" on top form another remarkable feature of this style.

This school of architecture prevailed during the Shah regime too, with the additions to the palace of Prithivi Narayan Shah at Basantpur, showing its glory. The notable features introduced by the Shah dynasty are the domical roof of temples in the same manner as it is found in Gorkha, and the Moghul derivative of the engrailed arches over doorways of Kathmandu.

With the advent of the age just prior to the modern one, on the threshold of the earlier epoch, art and architecture in Nepal began to register a marked decline.





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